

**HEATH BOARD OF HEALTH
MEETING MINUTES
July 10, 2024**

Board Members Present: Sheila Litchfield, Susan Gruen, Gene Garland -Chair, Tucker Jenkins-Interim member (waiting for paperwork) Cindie Garland -Boards Clerk, John Briggs – District Director for Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District.

0901 Meeting Called to Order by Gene Garland

REVIEW AGENDA/ADD ITEMS

- Gene requested to remove FRCOG Roundtable from the agenda because there was no meeting.
- Susan requested to add COVID discussion to the agenda.
- Sheila requested to add discussion of BOH involvement at the Heath Fair.

NEW BOARD MEMBER TUCKER JENKINS

- Tucker introduced himself to the board.
- Gene stated that he will follow up with Hilma regarding Tucker’s appointment paperwork.

JOHN BRIGGS (PVMCD) BRIEF

- Mr. Briggs provided an update on EEE or Triple E (Eastern Equine Encephalitis) in Massachusetts and surrounding states. There have been cases popping up across Massachusetts and Rhode Island. He was able to confirm of 6 pools of mosquitoes in Plymouth County that came back positive for Triple E and four pools that were culiseta melanura that is the primary vector for Triple E that is prominent in the bird population. Most survivors have residual neurologic sequelae. His team is studying the role it plays in the transmission cycle as it amplifies the virus among the bird population once it becomes prevalent enough that they have a spill over into other bridge vectors and two of those pools were in bridge vectors so to have it in culiseta melanura is early somewhat significant but to have it this early on in those bridge vectors is definitely something that his team would expect to be later on down the road. In the state of Rhode Island, they had found Triple E in Tiverton and Coventry and those are two separate areas in the state so it's indicating that it's pretty spread out in Rhode Island, even though Rhode Island is a tiny state, it's spread out and those were in mammal biting mosquitoes bridge factors. He added seeing it this early in bridge factors is a little concerning in those three areas they are unsure how it's going to work out in the disease dynamics this year. Last year cases worked its way up Connecticut and into the Worcester, MA area and then eventually into Hampden County. Historically they see it on the South Shore area Plymouth, Bristol County that's where the habitat is for melanura in the cedar swamps. They'll also use red maple swamps which are throughout the state, but they really prefer those cedar swamps and that is why they tend to be more productive and Triple E is more predominant around those areas. The red maple has open, above ground root mats that serve as excellent resting places for adult

mosquitoes. He doesn't have historical data to go on because they started last year to try to nail down melanura habitat so they would have a starting point. His team was able to find several areas that can be used to compare the data with and so far, this year they doubled the amount of melanura. Melanura did well during the offseason over winter in the larval phase. If there is plenty of water throughout the winter and spring. In the fall there are plenty of water too, it fills up creeks, they utilize in the cedar swamps and the red maple swamps and so they're just a lot more productive. There is a strong correlation between the water and mosquito productivity.

- Sheila asked John if they were looking for more melanura habitat and if finding more then they really can't compare with last year? John said they are comparing it with at the established sites which are in Chicopee and Longmeadow. Now expanding this year and finding more melanura habitat. This year numbers are going to be higher because they are targeting more areas. He added if you look at it the data across the state, other districts have been reporting higher than normal so they're looking at their 10-year means and all of them are above their 10-year means throughout the state so that's very significant. Even though they don't have that historical data that these are healthier populations for the area.
- Gene added that he noticed in the PVMCD report we haven't had anything positive thus far in Heath which is good news. Sheila states she attended the Heath Agricultural Society meeting and informed the members about the increased surveillance that's being done by PVMCD. She informed them the district would be monitoring the numbers and would give them as much of a heads up if there is something that we were concerned about. Sheila added the report didn't appear there was something likely going to be happening, she reminded the society that they needed to be very vigilant. John stated that he would get the information far in advance and before the weekly report is published. Then he would follow up with the BOH members for more details as in what the specific area. A mammal biting species, melanura, which have not been found any in key areas which is a positive for Heath. However, it doesn't mean they're not as prevalent as where he is seeing them down in Longmeadow and Chicopee. John stated melanura numbers are up throughout the district, but they are up across the state that's the most predominant species they are seeing throughout all the member communities and that's typical around this time of the year around July 4th. They kind of hit the peak of that bell curve and then they start to taper off.
- John stated that PVMCD hired a doctor (Lovett) who has a tremendous amount of experience in the field of epidemiology and who also performed work in Africa for mosquito arbovirus surveillance and designed viable methods to use to decrease the risk of transmission of malaria and all those other pathogens. John also added he is trying to obtain space at UMass Amherst. He would be able to collaborate the doctors at UMASS and be part of the research that these doctors are providing. PVMCD is still in the process of ironing out all the details and making sure they are going through all the proper processes for getting something like that in place but as of now it's been positive. John stated he has two new staff members. An intern who is producing public education tutorials. The last project the intern worked on was promoting dragonfly habitat which John will be sending out soon to all the member communities via the Pioneer Valley mailing list. James, the PVMCD new hire, has a master's in environmental science and Public Health and has been

doing a tremendous job with GIS and spatial analysis. He is writing code to find Red Maple swamps; they are using multiple (Geographic Information System) GIS layers. John stated in the software, once you train it enough it can do it on its own with a 90% confidence interval. They have been trapping in Hampden County for those areas just to bolster up their melanura surveillance. John said he didn't have them sample the swamps because it's very tricky to sample for melanura and a dangerous to send them in but if they do find melanura in those areas then they will know it has an established habitat to add to their database. John added that James has been helpful with using his GIS skills. They are hoping that he can do it for tires. He needs to run the program for about 12 hours and its confidence interval is 30% which is low so he's going to keep trying or try the old-fashioned way and look at it by looking at aerial imagery to find those tire piles that are close by the I-91 corridor including any rail yards or anything similar. The purpose is to find aedes albopictus mosquitos, it's an invasive species that are capable of transmitting Chikungunya and Dengue and possibly other things. They really want to keep a close eye on aedes albopictus, they'll come in on the tires with eggs. They're a tropical mosquito and somewhat subtropical they really need warm temperatures, and the tires produce this artificial habitat for them so if you take a stack of tires at the very bottom during the winter it never gets to freezing so it doesn't kill off the eggs and that's how they're able to become established artificially in those areas. They looked at the satellite imagery throughout all the member communities. West Springfield has a major rail yard going through right next to the Big E and less than 500 feet is a tractor trailer tire company that repurpose tires that are scattered everywhere. John was able to get a sample and found aedes albopictus habitat that is established in the area. This is a concern for habitat of West Nile Virus and possibly Triple E. That is a concern from a Public Health issue from a mosquito standpoint. They are not looking at just Agriculture areas but all areas. Sheila mentioned tires at the fairgrounds. Are there larvicides available? John said he will take care of it. Sheila said she will let Susan know the location. John said he is doing 2 traps in Heath which includes CDC CO2 mosquito trap bottle samples this includes 100 mosquitoes. PVMCD needs CO2 to maintain the surveillance operation. John said there are no problems obtaining the CO2 bottles.

- Gene asked John about ULV ground spraying and the policy. John said it is more an action threshold however, the DPH recommends the spraying, sooner the better. However, DPH doesn't dictate. If it becomes a moderate threshold, high risk level for human transition, then John would begin the discussion with the BOH's that spraying is a possible option. Multiple isolates of Triple E and mammal biting mosquitoes would be the trigger to recommend spraying. Moreover, if there is Triple E animal case and high number of melanura, which PVMCD does not have an established data. Sheila asked if a town meeting vote would be needed before spraying? John said if it comes to a moderate level threshold and spraying is recommended, he will need a vote from the Selectboard and/or Board of Health. Gene state that he thinks majority of the residents in Heath would not recommend a spraying operation regardless of the situation. He stated since Heath is such a rural area there's no real concentrated housing area or urban area would it be effective because we are blowing pesticide in the wind so to speak. He added the only real area he thought would be viable would be like Heath's Town Center and maybe Mohawk Estates. John said

if they're finding in the surveillance data that there's an abundant amount of mammal biting mosquitoes that are coming back positive for example Swamp Road or Taylor Brook Road. Also, areas that is not around Town Center that would be a candidate for doing that small

- area application to knock those bridge vectors down that play a role in amplifying the virus to cause they'll feed on both birds and mammals. John said it doesn't necessarily have to be in a concentrated area but realistically he couldn't imagine Heath having a Triple E outbreak this year because of its northern location. He said it is not a guarantee but extremely surprised if it made it up to Heath.
- Susan said she will be at the Selectboard meeting and Sheila said she will try to attend. Sheila recapped of what John said for the spraying to happen at a moderate level a town vote is not necessary but a vote from the Select Board or Board of Health. She added that we don't want to alarm people, but she thinks that the most important thing is to make sure that the Select Board is comfortable that PVMCD and the Board of Health are watching this and will alert them if a problem seems imminent.
- Sheila mentioned what the Board of Health plans to do in terms of informing the public. Displaying the posters from PVMCD but also providing bug dope at the Heath Fair. Susan stated she called the company that makes it and asked them if they would donate the bug wipes, and they said no so the BOH will have to pay for it. Cindie stated the BOH had extra money for FY24 to support the request. Cindie said she would submit the request. There is an anticipation between 1000 and 1500 people per day at the Heath Fair. Friday night may be closer to 2000 people attending.

REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES

- June 12, 2024, Meeting Minutes: Sheila moved to accept the minutes with corrections as written. Gene seconded the motion. Ayes: Susan, Sheila, and Gene.
- Sheila stated she has not heard back from the Opioid Task Force about when they're going to bring the van to the food pantry. She thinks they were trying to get some kind of sense of how much interest there would be and whether there would be a space for them to have the van there. She added that she has not heard that they're going to come on their next distribution which is the 14th of July.

REGIONAL HEALTH AGENT UPDATE

- Randy or Kurt did not phone in during the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

NURSE UPDATE

- Nurses report: In June Claire Rabbitt, RN made two home visits.
- She attended a webinar on the MIIS and the Arbovirus exercise in Shelburne on June 24.
- She is returning the remaining 5 doses of influenza vaccine for reimbursement and received notice of reimbursement of \$133.65 for vaccine given this past season. The next report will be in September.

- In reading the instructions with the blood glucose meter, it requires cleaning wipes with EPA reg 9480-4 that can be ordered from Amazon. Claire will investigate ordering the wipes.
- Claire ended the report by reminding board members to protect against mosquitoes and ticks.
- Susan stated Claire is planning on providing a diabetes program.

COVID UPDATE

- Susan stated there are two or three cases of COVID and she has one COVID test kit left. There are no longer free COVID tests, she doesn't know whether we're going to be offered more free kits in September and October. Claire had 9 COVID test kits remaining. Gene stated maybe we can use our revolving fund if we need to purchase more test kits. Susan stated there is a new COVID strand, it's called FLIRT, and there is no information about a new vaccine for that strand. Sheila stated there's going to be a vaccination clinic in October at the Hawlemont School.

BOARD OF HEALTH CLERK UPDATE

- Cindie reviewed the BOH monthly budget (see below).
- She also reviewed the 2024 TOP spreadsheet. 75% applications received and \$2,900 collected as of 07/10/24.
- The board members agreed to order more tick test coupons from MedZu and mosquito wipes to distribute at the Heath Fair.

MONTHLY BUDGET:

BOH ACCOUNTS	BUDGET	INCOME	EXPENSED	BALANCE
BOH Expenses	1,500.00		594.50	905.50
Personnel Expenses	8,685.00		2,339.92	6,345.08
Stipends	1,375.00			1,375.00
CARRYOVER ACCOUNTS				
BOH Revolving Fund	11,524.12	50.00	166.40	11,407.72
Septic Grant	43,832.98	14.54		43,847.52

COOLING CENTER AT JRMC

- Cindie and Sheila agreed JRMC was very warm and currently not a good place for a cooling center.
- Gene stated he was not sure when the Community Hall project will be complete, so the basement could be used as a cooling center as it has in the past. Sheila stated that she heard the project was complete and waiting for the Selectboard to approve opening the building for events. There are activities scheduled at Community Hall for future use. Sheila recommended purchasing a portable floor type air conditioner for the BOH office or the Senior Center or any room at the JRMC that a cooling center can be set up. Susan suggested going in with the Council of Aging to purchase a portable floor type conditioner or asking Randy if there are funds to purchase one.

ONGOING BUSINESS:

CPHS OVERSIGHT BOARD MEETING REPORT

- No meeting due to the June 24th, 2024, CPHS- FRCOG MOSQUITO PALOOZA TABLETOP EXERCISE
- Susan said the tabletop exercise went very well and felt the Town of Heath was prepared and knowledgeable for a West Nile Virus and Triple E outbreak and emergency planning.
- Sheila said the organizers of the tabletop exercise didn't allow time for the teams to discuss what they can improve in their own towns. The time was spent on what the health district could do for all towns. Which was very valuable. There was no discussion in what an emergency center is and how it is activated and operated. There is guidance how the EOC is operated. They didn't discuss the MEMA guidelines. Sheila added that historically there has been a power struggle between MEMA and DPH on emergency response. She added that the facilitator missed an opportunity to inform folks of the EOC training that is available to all towns. Sheila stated the Town of Heath emergency response team has it together. She added we have a good network and EDS (emergency dispensing site). Gene mentioned that Pheobe Walker sent out a survey to all participants at the exercise. Sheila stated she filled one out and submitted it.
- Sheila stated she has been working with Tim Lively about the Regional Emergency Response Network and how they can collaborate with the BOH. Susan spoke with Kate from the Heath Library if they have an emergency plan. What does the Council of Aging or the library do during a snowstorm, blizzard, or ice storm? How do they reach out to our elderly? She added that the BOH knows who are in high risk. The board members agreed that the BOH meet with the library and Council of Aging representatives to have a conversation about emergency response planning, possibly in November.

PIONEER VALLEY MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT (PVMCD) Updates

- Susan stated there was nothing more to add to what John Briggs had already stated earlier. However, she did state the PVMCD team was very responsive.

BOH ACTION REPORT

- Gene mentioned that he drove through Mohawk Estates to verify that folks were placing the Temporary Occupancy Permit stickers on their campers/trailers. Gene did not see any sewage pipelines coming out of the campers/trailers. However, he did notice several abandoned campers. He will write up a report and submit it to Jenny Hamilton. Sheila suggested talking to the Police Chief for some pointers. The board is actively looking for someone from Mohawk Estates to join the team.

FUTURE MEETINGS

- The team agreed not to have a meeting in August. The September will be held at the beginning of the month and the October 16th meeting will be in person in the BOH office at the JRMC.

Next Meeting Sept 4, 2024, 0900

Gene motioned to adjourn at 1007; Sheila seconded the motion. Ayes: Sheila, Susan, Tucker and Gene

Meeting Adjourned 1007.